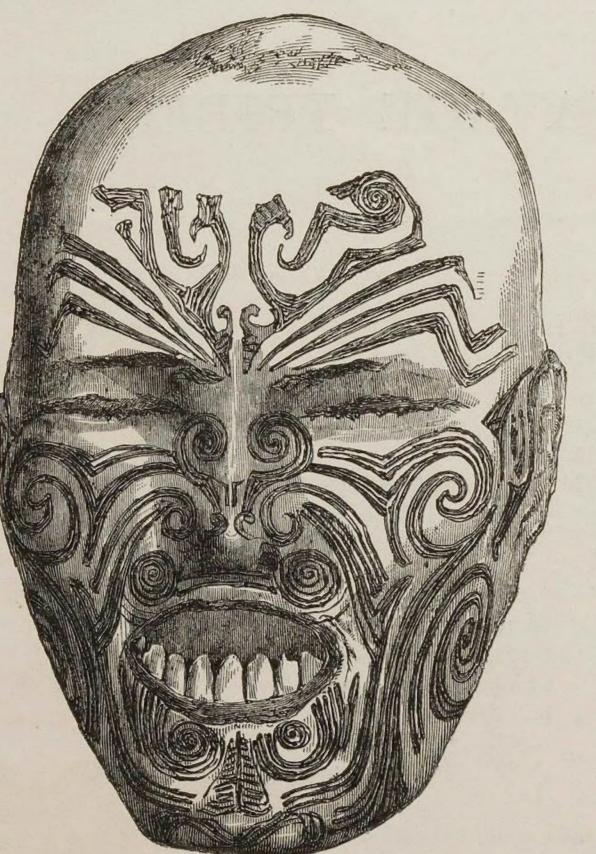


## ORNAMENT OF SAVAGE TRIBES.

decoration of the rude tent or wigwam to the sublime works of a Phidias and Praxiteles, the same feeling is everywhere apparent: the highest ambition is still to create, to stamp on this earth the impress of an individual mind.

From time to time a mind stronger than those around will impress itself on a generation, and carry with it a host of others of less power following in the same track, yet never so closely as to destroy the individual ambition to create; hence the cause of styles, and of the modifications of styles. The efforts of a people in an early stage of civilisation are like those of children, though presenting a want of power, they possess a grace and *naïveté* rarely found in mid-age, and never in manhood's decline. It is equally so in the infancy of any art. Cimabue and Giotto have not the material charm of Raphael or the manly power of Michael Angelo, but surpass them both in grace and earnest truth. The very command of means leads to their abuse: when Art struggles, it succeeds; when revelling in its own successes, it as signally fails. The pleasure we receive in contemplating the rude attempts at ornament of the most savage tribes arises from our appreciation of a difficulty accomplished; we are at once charmed by the evidence of the intention, and surprised at the simple and ingenious process by which the result is obtained. In fact, what we seek in every work of Art, whether it be humble or pretentious, is the evidence of mind,—the evidence of that desire to create to which we have referred, and which all, feeling a natural instinct within them, are satisfied with when they find it developed in others. It is strange, but so it is, that this evidence of mind will be more readily found in the rude attempts at



Female Head from New Zealand, in the Museum, Chester.

ornament of a savage tribe than in the innumerable productions of a highly-advanced civilisation. Individuality decreases in the ratio of the power of production. When Art is manufactured by combined effort, not originated by individual effort, we fail to recognise those true instincts which constitute its greatest charm.

Plate I. The ornaments on this Plate are from portions of clothing made chiefly from the bark of trees. Patterns Nos. 2 and 9 are from a dress brought by Mr. Oswald Brierly from Tongatabu, the principal of the Friendly Island group. It is made from thin sheets of the inner rind of the bark of a species of hibiscus, beaten out and united together so as to form one long parallelogram of cloth, which being wrapped many times round the body as a petticoat, and leaving the chest, arms, and shoulders bare, forms the only dress of the natives. Nothing, therefore, can be more primitive, and yet the arrangement of the pattern shows the most refined taste and skill. No. 9 is the border on the edge of the cloth; with the same limited means of production, it would be difficult to improve upon it. The patterns are formed by small wooden stamps, and although the work is somewhat rude and irregular in execution, the intention is everywhere apparent; and we are at once struck with the skilful balancing of the masses, and the judicious correction of the tendency of the eye to run in any one direction by opposing to them lines having an opposite tendency.

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When Mr. Brierly visited the island one woman was the designer of all the patterns in use there, and for every new pattern she designed she received as a reward a certain number of yards of cloth. The pattern No. 2, from the same place, is equally an admirable lesson in composition which we may derive from an artist of a savage tribe. Nothing can be more judicious than the general arrangement of the four squares and the four red spots. Without the red spots on the yellow ground there would have been a great want of repose in the general arrangement; without the red lines round the red spots to carry the red through the yellow, it would have been still imperfect. Had the small red triangles turned outwards instead of inwards, the repose of the pattern would again have been lost, and the effect produced on the eye would have been that of squinting; as it is, the eye is centred in each square, and centred in each group by the red spots round the centre square. The stamps which form the pattern are very simple, each triangle and each leaf being a single stamp, we thus see how readily the possession of a simple tool, even by the most uncultivated, if guided by an instinctive observation of the forms in which all the works of Nature are arranged, would lead to the creation of all the geometrical arrangements of form with which we are acquainted. On the upper left-hand corner of pattern No. 2, the eight-pointed star is formed by eight applications of the same tool; as also the black flower with sixteen pointing inwards and sixteen pointing outwards . The most complicated patterns of the Byzantine, Arabian, and Moresque mosaics would be generated by the same means. The secret of success in all ornament is the production of a broad general effect by the repetition of a few simple elements; variety should rather be sought in the arrangement of the several portions of a design, than in the multiplicity of varied forms.

The stamping of patterns on the coverings of the body, when either of skins of animals or material such as this, would be the first stage towards ornament after the tattooing of the body by an analogous process. In both there would remain a greater variety and individuality than in subsequent processes, which would become more mechanical. The first notions of weaving which would be given by the plaiting of straws or strips of bark, instead of using them as thin sheets, would have equally the same result of gradually forming the mind to an appreciation of the proper disposition of masses: the eye of the savage, accustomed only to look upon Nature's harmonies, would readily enter into the perception of the true balance both of form and colour; in point of fact, we find that it is so, that in savage ornament the true balance of both is always maintained.

After the formation of ornament by stamping and weaving, would naturally follow the desire of forming ornament in relief or carving. The weapons for defence or the chase would first attract attention. The most skilful and the bravest would desire to be distinguished from their fellows by the possession of weapons, not only more useful, but more beautiful. The shape best fitted for the purpose having been found by experience, the enriching of the surface by carving would naturally follow; and the eye, already accustomed to the geometrical forms produced by weaving, the hand would seek to imitate them by a similar repetition of cuts of the knife. The ornaments on Plate II. show this instinct very fully. They are executed with the utmost precision, and exhibit great taste and judgment in the distribution of the masses. Nos. 11 and 12 are interesting, as showing how much this taste and skill may exist in the formation of geometrical patterns, whilst those resulting from curved lines, and the human form more especially, remain in the very first stage.

